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## A Horseman's Guide to Trail Riding

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A HORSEMAN'S GUIDE TO

# trail riding

TYPES OF TRAIL RIDES  
SELECTING A TRAIL HORSE  
EQUIPMENT NEEDS  
TRAINING FOR THE TRAIL  
ORGANIZING A RIDE  
WHERE TO TRAIL RIDE IN INDIANA



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, PURDUE UNIVERSITY, WEST LAFAYETTE, INDIANA

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# A horseman's guide to **trail riding**

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*A well-planned, well-managed pleasure trail ride  
monitors safety, speed of the ride  
and logistics.  
Here the lead rider keeps  
in walkie-talkie communication  
with the drag rider.*



There are in the United States today more than 8 million pleasure horses—and the number is growing. Reason for this strong interest is at least three-fold: (1) a popular, nationwide 4-H Club horse and pony program; (2) the “companionship” nature of the horse (i.e., an animal that you do things *with*, that evokes human emotions and responds to them); and (3) most importantly, family involvement or togetherness that seems to result from horse ownership.

This involvement could include family preparation for and participation in workshops, county fairs, breed shows, state-wide competitions, rodeos and horse races. (Long hours will be spent grooming, training and conditioning the horse, selecting or repairing tack.) Or it might mean planning together to purchase a horse in the spring, or maybe working together in renovating the barn, constructing a stall or mending fence.

But even simpler sources of employment revolve around the “family horse”, such as spending the twilight hour together by the corral just watching and being totally unsophisticated; or taking a ride merely to enjoy the horse, the out-of-doors and the pleasures of relaxation.

There is growing interest across the country in this latter aspect of horse ownership. Those not inclined towards the competition of the show-ring or not willing to spend a lot of money are finding excitement and satisfaction in an emerging horse activity called *trail riding*.

The purpose of this publication is to acquaint pleasure horse owners with the concept of trail-riding, the range of trail riding activities, the equipment and preparation required, and guidelines for organizing a trail ride event. Listed at the end of this publication are the Indiana parks, forests and recreational areas where trail riding is permitted, including information on accommodations and costs.

# Types of Trail Rides

## PLEASURE RIDE

This makes up, by far, the largest category of trail riding activities. Pleasure rides range from a single family on a afternoon outing to several hundred people caravanning across picturesque national park-lands for weeks at a time.

The pleasure trail ride may or may not be sponsored. If it is, the sponsoring organization is usually a 4-H group, breed association, saddle club or community in close proximity to the ride site. Sponsored events are usually open to horses of any breed and grade, even mules. There may be a small participation fee; but if so, there is also usually a family rate. The advertising flyer will specify the minimum fee for participants, if any.

Pleasure rides are usually for a weekend and cover from 10-25 miles per day. The trail itself may be point-to-point, circular or loop, or "wagon-wheel" (see page 22 for descriptions).

Foremost in the mind of the pleasure ride participant is relaxation and enjoyment. Campfire cooking, sing-alongs and swapping of tall tales all contribute to its success. Any "competition" should be confined to routine activities or to humorous or unusual attire—e.g., "best groomed horse", "rider with the largest hat", etc.

## ENDURANCE RIDE

The idea of endurance riding is to present horse and rider with a monumental task, that being to cover a given distance on a well-marked but rigorous trail in a given amount of time—and to have the horse finish in good condition. Judging is strictly on a time and condition scale. Neither equitation style of the rider nor trail manners and abilities of the horse are taken into consideration.

Minimum distance of an endurance ride is 50 miles, while maximums are 100-102 miles. Maximum time allowed to complete the ride is typically 10-12 hours for 50 milers and 24 hours for 100 miles. There is no minimum time the rider must spend on the trail (see "Competitive Trail Ride" next). So there is an element of racing involved and an award given for the "first horse in".

Since the purpose of endurance riding is to condition both horse and rider thoroughly enough to complete the ride in good condition, checkpoints are established along the trail to evaluate the horse's ability to continue. These checkpoints should be staffed by a veterinarian and trained assistants. The

veterinarian's decision as to whether a horse may or may not continue is considered final, and his checkpoint appraisal is used in final scoring of each horse's relative condition.

Endurance rides are open to all breeds of registered horses, grade horses and mules. There is no restriction as to sex of horse. Junior riders are usually allowed to participate if accompanied on the trail by an adult sponsor.

This type of trail ride is not entirely a "win-or-lose" proposition, because all who finish with their horses in good condition receive "completion" awards—often an appropriately engraved buckle. In addition to these and the "first horse in" award, there are awards to the "top ten" horses, one of which also receives the "best condition" award, often considered the ultimate prize in endurance riding. Most endurance rides also recognize the fastest-time horse of each registered breed.

## COMPETITIVE RIDE

The object of a competitive trail ride is to have all horses complete a given course in approximately the same amount of time and award first prize to the horse completing the course in the best condition. To accomplish this, there must be maximum and minimum time allotments. No element of racing is involved, as in endurance riding; in fact, points may be deducted for finishing the course or reaching a checkpoint ahead of schedule.

This type of event may involve several days of riding in competition. Usual distance is 25-40 miles per day, with 6½-7 hours allowed for each day's ride. The judging, usually done by a veterinarian and experienced horsemen, is based on soundness, condition, manners, way-of-going and, sometimes, horsemanship. Often, only soundness and condition are evaluated.

Competitive trail rides are open to all breeds of registered horses, grade horses and mules—geldings, mares and stallions—at least 5 years of age. Also, contestants compete according to weight divisions as follows (includes tack and rider): heavyweight, over 190 pounds; and lightweight, 140-189 pounds. There is also a junior division, not divided by weight. Each division awards whatever placings are appropriate for the given ride.

*Novice rides* are often held for younger horses and beginning riders. These are over less rigorous courses and with time schedules more appropriate to "green" horses and "learning" riders.



# Selecting a Trail Horse

*The best riding trails provide a combination of deep forests, open meadows, shallow creek or river crossings, and ridge riding. The key is informality and relaxation amid nature's beauty.*



## PLEASURE RIDE HORSE

### Breed

There is seemingly no advantage of one breed of horse over another for pleasure trail riding. In fact, at the pleasure ride events involving hundreds of riders, one usually sees representatives of literally every pure breed. Even saddle-type mules are being used in increasing numbers. This lack of necessity for "fancy horseflesh" is perhaps one of the strongest drawing points for trail riding.

### Sex

While no limitation is placed upon sex of the horse, geldings and mares are most often chosen for pleasure trail ride events.

Although stallions in the hands of competent adults may be outstanding mounts, the potential problems are too great to recommend them as a first choice. Not only must the manners and ability of any given horse-rider combination be considered, but also the lack of manners and inability of others on the ride. In other words, an unthinking rider can force an accident involving an otherwise well-mannered stallion, with predictable disastrous results.

Before selecting a mare, keep in mind her limited availability if she is to be used as a breeding animal. Reference here is not only to the times when she is either very close to foaling or nursing a very young foal, but maybe more importantly, to the times when she is in "heat". During this period, a mare is unpredictable; and there is always the possibility of her being in close proximity to breeding stallions during the course of a ride. Although the stallion should be kept under control, if injury occurs, it makes little difference whose "fault" it was.

### Age

Practically speaking, there is no limitation as to age of a pleasure trail riding horse. However, common sense dictates that you not use a 2-year-old or slow-maturing 3-year-old on an extended or rigorous trail. By the same token, there is no better way to take the "spooks" out of a youngster than to expose him to the trail. (Ability and experience of the rider become very important here.) Older horses, even those in their 20's if sound, can serve nicely as pleasure trail companions.

## Conformation

Unlike breed, age and sex, conformation is an important consideration in selecting a pleasure trail horse. A trail-type animal is one that is structurally correct and sound. Extreme muscling, show-ring eye appeal, "breedy-headedness" and/or color are of no consequence.

Size should be considered only to the extent that horse and rider are suited to one another. The horse must be large enough to carry his rider, but small enough to be easily mounted or dismounted.

Prominent withers are a must. If wither development is lacking (mutton-withered), two things will likely happen: (1) the saddle will continually slip and need constant readjustment; and (2) the cinch will then be overtightened to stop the slipping and thereby cause a galling or cinch sore.

Avoid extreme refinement for the breed. Instead, choose as a prospective pleasure trail mount one of the less refined individuals of the breed desired. Although no one would select a platter-footed, gross-boned beast, adequate foot and bone are necessary to both cope with the rigors of a trail and carry the body attached to them.

Correctness in limbs, both fore and rear, is another important conformation feature. Look for the pasterns (the horse's "shock absorbers") to be sloping, not straight. If too upright, the shoulders will likely be the same way, and the resulting concussion from trail riding will literally jar rider and horse to the point of unsoundness.

Viewed from the front, the mid-line of hoof, pastern, fetlock, cannon, knee, forearm and point-of-shoulder should be in a straight line. Any offset knees (bench-knee) or tendency to splay-foot or pigeon-toe will be exaggerated during long hours on the trail. Viewed from the side, the front legs should not show a tendency to be "over" at the knee (buck-knee) or "back" at the knee (calf-knee). Hind legs should be free of "posty" tendencies (too straight) as well as extreme "set" to the hock (sickle-hock).

Hooves should be symmetrical (i.e., two matched sets), free of cracks, wide at the heel and concave rather than flat of sole.

## Disposition

The "ideal" pleasure trail horse, in terms of temperament, is gentle and steady, with no tendency to panic. His "character references" would probably read something like this:

"Content to lead or to follow, either alone or in a group. Capable of accepting feed and water as found on the trail. Free of dangerous vices and stable enough to ignore nervous companions. Trail-wise to the extent that, given his 'head', he'll find his way out."

Here, on the other hand, are types of horses to avoid for pleasure trail riding:

1. Ones that can't get along either *with* other horses or *without* other horses.
2. Those that colic or go-off-feed easily, for there will always be strange food and water encountered on the trail.
3. Those that kick, bite, strike or exhibit similar vices difficult to cope with on the trail. Such horses are identified by a red ribbon on their tails; so beware!
4. Nervous (dancing, pawing, fretting) animals. Not only are they no fun to ride, but also they usually tire quickly because of burned up nervous energy.

## "Way-of-Going"

There are two aspects to this selection criterion—mental and physical; and they deserve equal consideration. Mentally, a good pleasure trail horse is alert, crisp and clean in his movements, light on his feet, quick to speed up or slow down as commanded, and generally gives the impression of liking what he is doing. Physically, he is free of stumbling, interfering and forging. His stride, while not "daisy-clipping", is certainly not animated like show-ring animals. In short, the ideal pleasure trail horse moves "efficiently".

## ENDURANCE RIDE AND COMPETITIVE RIDE HORSES

Except for occasional events which might have a few unique rules, the comments made concerning breed, sex and age for pleasure trail horses are also appropriate for endurance and competitive trail ride horses. Conformation and way-of-going criteria, however, are much more important for endurance and competitive rides, since these events might be two to ten times more rigorous than a pleasure trail ride.

Weaknesses in conformation and defects in way-of-going that might go unnoticed in the show-ring or even on the pleasure trail, will become most obvious during the endurance or competitive trail ride. Besides eliminating any chance to win against truly sound horses, these problems may even prevent you from completing the ride. Simply



stated, when selecting a horse for these events, *if you can see the problem, the horse just won't do*. Even an animal that "looks perfect" should be given a soundness exam by a veterinarian.

When it comes to disposition, one can afford to "step down" a bit from pleasure trail horse

standards. There is no need for endurance or competitive trail mounts to accept company, to lead or follow, or to stand quietly. In other words, a "hotter" horse might be acceptable. But he still has to stand tied (and maybe next to other horses), to accept strange food and water, and to rest when he can (e.g., overnight on a 2- or 3-day ride).



*Stabling of the horses on a ride may range from picket lines to hitching posts to temporary corrals. Notice the rails are attached with twine rather than more permanent and potentially hazardous wire or nails.*

## Equipment for Horse and Rider

The equipment needed for trail riding activities need not be fancy, but it does have to be substantial, proper fitting and efficient. While a galling saddle or broken stirrup leather is uncomfortable and embarrassing in the show ring, it can be disastrous 25 miles from help.

Following is a brief description of the basic trail ride equipment for both horse and rider, with tips on what to look for and what to avoid when buying such equipment. How important the specific features of each item are, depends on your particular animal, your personal preference and your pocketbook.

### THE SADDLE

Western saddles are the common choice of trail riders. English saddles will also do; in fact, where weight and competition are important, they are probably a better choice. However, since the majority of rides are the pleasure trail type, our comments will be restricted to western saddles.

A western saddle usually has many *latigos* and *attachment "D's"* for carrying saddlebags, rain slicker, canteen, etc. When selecting a trail riding saddle, be sure these latigos and "D's" are strong and substantially attached.



Two other important considerations are *withers clearance* and *rigging position*. Many western saddles today are too low in the gullet to give adequate clearance over the prominent withers desired on a good trail horse. There should always be 2-inch clearance between blankets (over withers) and bottom of the gullet—after riding for a few minutes. If less than 2 inches, the saddle will likely come to rest on the spine during the rigors of the trail, resulting in open sores or a painfully tender back.

Most saddles today are rigged in either the “full” or “ $\frac{7}{8}$ ” position. And that’s fine for roping, cutting and running, where quick stops, roll-backs, etc. call for maximum saddle stability. Since action during these events is not continuous, there is little likelihood of galling, due to the forward position of the cinch (full or  $\frac{7}{8}$  rigging).

With the continuous activity of a trail ride, however, the cinch must be away from the horse’s front leg if galling is to be prevented. Therefore, trail ride saddles should be rigged in the “ $\frac{3}{4}$ ” or even “ $\frac{1}{2}$ ” position. While this means some loss of stability, trail riding does not require the extreme stability needed when riding a cutting horse.

Last but not least, select a saddle that fits you and remains comfortable over extended periods of riding. It’s usually a good idea to ride a friend’s saddle similar to the one you are considering before actually buying it.

## SADDLE PADDING

Saddle pads and blankets should be selected with three goals in mind: (1) to cushion tender skin and prominent bones from the harshness of the saddle; (2) to absorb, evaporate and generally remove the salty, grimy perspiration from the horse’s skin, which would otherwise cause raw, tender areas to develop; and (3) to prevent the fleece backing on the saddle skirts from becoming matted with dirt, hair and sweat.

Too often, blankets and pads are chosen on the basis of looks rather than the above purposes. For the rigors of trail riding, any of the following suggestions would be appropriate:

- Medium weight absorbent pad (felt, hair or synthetic) under a good heavyweight blanket.
- Extra thick pad-blanket combination (manufactured as one product).

*Throughout the ride, ample time must be given to rest both horse and rider. Note the halter attached to the saddle latigos; at the noon stop, the horse will be tied with it.*



- Medium weight blanket next to skin, followed by a heavyweight blanket.

Do not cover more of the horse's back than is necessary to cover the saddle area, due to the heat build up.

## HEADGEAR AND RESTRAINT EQUIPMENT

Choice of headgear is up to the individual. Although the snaffle bits, curb bits, bosals and mechanical hackamores are the most common items, the soundest advice is to use whatever headgear your horse responds to and *is used to*. A two-day ride is no time to try out a new piece of biting equipment. And be sure all curb straps, cheek-pieces, poll straps and reins are in top repair.

Trail horses must learn to stand tied. This is necessary not only for overnight at the base camp, but also at frequent intervals along the trail. Never tie a horse with the reins. A sudden panic will result in a damaged mouth, torn-up equipment and a loose horse if he is rein-tied.

Many riders fit a flat nylon web halter beneath the headstall for the entire ride; then upon stopping, they simply take a lead rope from the saddlebag and tie the horse as it should be. Others use a neck rope, either permanently attached for the ride or carried in their saddle bag. Be sure the horse is accustomed to a neck rope before using it on the trail.

Another good method of restraining a horse, especially for overnight, is to use hobbles. The "figure-8" or "Utah" hobble is a good choice, either in leather or web nylon. The horse must be trained at home to stand and graze quietly with hobbles in place.

As with other gear, the leather, webbing, rope and snaps of any restraint equipment must be substantial enough and in good repair to do their intended job.

## BREAST COLLARS

A breast collar is essential in rough terrain to keep the saddle from sliding rearwards on the horse. The collar should fit high enough on the chest to avoid interfering with leg motion, yet low enough not to restrict flow of wind through the horse's neck. A good choice is one that fits truly in the middle of the chestfront and is held there by a strap over the neck.

Attach the breast collar to the rigging rings or collar "D's" on the saddle proper, not to the cinch itself or to the latigos.

## PERSONAL AND MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT

What "extra" equipment to take on a trail ride is, for the most part, a matter of personal preference. Following is a list of articles found to be necessary or at least useful on a pleasure trail ride more than one day long. The asterisk (\*) means the item is necessary for a 1-day ride. Study the list, consider your own desires and alter accordingly.

(*Word of caution:* Remember that extra equipment has to be carried in—either on your horse's back, by pack horse or by vehicle. Therefore, choose wisely and sparingly. Leather or canvas saddlebags are excellent containers for articles carried with you. A "horn-pouch" is also convenient for often used items.)

\**Hat*—wide brim for sun and rain protection.

\**Boots*—Western or English with at least 10-inch tops.

\**Clothes*—loose fitting and durable; one complete change, if overnight.

*Jacket*—light to medium weight, *not* waterproof.

\**Rain slicker or poncho.*

*Sleeping bag*—or at least a ground-cover and blankets.

\**Toilet articles.*

\**First-aid kit*—containing at least antiseptic, bandages, liniment, aspirin, snakebite kit for rider and horse.

*Hand-ax*—one-end blunt.

*Wood saw*—12- or 14-inch.

*Grooming equipment.*

\**Restraint equipment*—halter, leadrope, hobbles, extra curb-strap and extra girth.

\**Canteen.*

\**Food*—remember, your appetite grows outdoors.

*Cooking and eating utensils.*

*Buckets*—for feeding and watering horses, dishwashing, etc.

\**Horse feed*—grain,  $\frac{3}{4}$  pound per 100 pounds horse; hay, 1 pound per 100 pounds horse.

*Spare horseshoes*—front and rear, nails, hoof nippers, hoof knife, rasp, driving hammer.

*Camera*—extra film and flashcubes.

*Binoculars*—light weight.

\**Notebook*—small, pocket-size and pen.

\**Sunglasses.*

\**Mosquito repellent, sunburn lotion, chap-stick.*

\**Flashlight*—spare batteries.

\**Matches*—stash several waterproof and childproof containers throughout the gear.

*Firewood or canned fuel*—check local restrictions; if wet weather, wood that will burn may be scarce.



# Training and Conditioning the Trail Horse

## BASIC TRAINING

Much of the following is first-level material that any horse (reining, hunter-jumper or draft) should be readily capable of doing before anything more advanced is attempted.

The horse must learn to stand tied in an absolutely quiet manner! It should make no difference where or to what he is tied—fence post, tree limb, blank wall, picketline, along side or near other horses. Firing a cap pistol or small firecracker, banging pots and pans, or a loud shout from behind should “raise an ear” at worst! If he is not that trustworthy, he needs more time tied to a stout post or innertube and plenty more “sacking-out”.

During this “sacking-out” period, (whether 8 months old or 8 years old) the horse should become accustomed to grooming, foot-work, saddling, mounting and dismounting and dangling ropes ... *from either side.*

This is also the time to introduce hobbles. Perhaps the most effective way is to use two people—one controlling the lead rope, the other controlling a rope tied to the hobbles. As the horse moves away (not respecting hobbles), the hobbleman pulls the horse off balance, while the head-man keeps the horse aimed away from the fence or other obstacles. The idea is not to “throw” the horse, but rather to instill in him the fear of falling (or fighting the hobbles). Select a soft area of ground for training with hobbles, in case the horse does happen to throw himself.

The horse should absolutely know the meaning of “WHOA”! Leisurely sessions on the lunge line are usually sufficient for this type of training. At a walk or jog, first ask the horse to whoa and wait perhaps a second for stopping; then, if the horse is still moving, throw your weight into the lunge line while shouting whoa. Even a totally green horse usually needs only a session or two of this to learn *WHOA!*

The progression of biting, long-lining and starting under saddle is the subject of many excellent books and articles. Read them and heed them! But remember that the horse should not be taken beyond the pasture fence until he is truly a horse “ready to finish”.

## TRAINING FOR THE TRAIL

Once your horse has received the basic training outlined above and you have successfully started him under saddle, attention can now turn to two trail horse essentials—walking and backing.

## Walking

Any horse worthy of the trail must be able to “walk-out” in a rapid, purposeful manner. From the outset of training he should be “pushed up” between legs and hands so that he is walking as rapidly as he can. One can always slow a horse’s walk; but if an habitual meandering-type walk is allowed to develop, speeding the horse up becomes an ordeal.

Probably the worst thing one can do is to “cool” his horse out while riding him at a slow, sloppy walk. Cooling-out is important, but do it from the ground, not the saddle—and even then don’t poke around! Many hours spent in a large pasture away from the fence is important to develop a horse with a straight, ground-covering walk and jog.

## Backing

There are probably as many ways to teach a horse to “back” as there are horsemen. However, keep one thing in mind—the horse’s leg was designed to move him forward, not rearward. Therefore, he must be *taught* to coordinate his movements differently than nature intended if he is to back well. A pastured horse seldom backs up, but rather rolls back over his hocks. This is fine in a large area, but many times a trail will “blind-alley”, and the only way to get out is to back up.

Initially, backing should be taught with the trainer on the ground using a lead rope and brush handle. The emphasis of this phase of instruction is getting the horse, on cue, to move away from pressure. Here are the desired responses to touch that should be reinforced throughout the entire training period—(1) the horse moves his hind quarters when touched just behind the girth; (2) he moves his forequarters when touched just in front of the girth; and (3) he moves his entire body sidewise when touched on the girth—from both sides!

As the horse becomes “pressure-sensitive”, he will move rearwards in response to “poking” on his chest or shoulder area. Speed of backing is unimportant on the trail, so strive for immediate and continuous response to the cue, not a rapid scurrying back. After several sessions, he should be backing 2 feet or 20 feet, depending on how long the cue is applied.

Now the horse is ready for work from the saddle. This phase of the training calls for two people—one on the horse and the other working from the ground. First, decide what “cue” is going to be used from the

saddle. One good one is to shift your weight rearward while moving your legs slightly forward. Then administer this new cue in an exaggerated manner, just before the ground man uses the old "poking" cue from the front. At no time do you need

*Water crossings are usually fun, but "safety first" must be the rule. Notice the safety rider observing completion of the crossing. Careful crossing site selection is important for group rides.*



to touch the reins. Since the horse has been taught to move away from pressure, he is steered by moving his front quarters as necessary.

Gradually, the poking cue becomes unnecessary as the horse begins to associate your shifting movements as his cue to back up. If he gets sloppy in his response, don't hesitate to reinforce from the ground.

### **Accepting Trail Conditions**

The trail horse must learn to accept strange horses and strange surroundings and to both follow and lead. The only way to teach these things is to expose him to such situations. Riding through forests, across creeks (very shallow) and over as much different terrain as available are all important.

Choose your riding companions carefully at first, since your horse will tend to mimic another horse's habits—whether good or bad—such as slow walking, turning away from obstacles and shying from "spooks". Also, be sure the other horses do not kick at your horse if he is following or bite at him if he is leading. A "green" trail horse will soon learn to avoid others if he is treated this way.

### **Crossing Water Courses**

For most horsemen, training a horse to unhesitatingly accept a water-crossing is not an easy task. Here are a few suggestions that might help:

1. Arrange the paddock or pasture area such that the animal must cross a man-made ditch (8-10 feet wide and 2-3 feet deep) at each feeding. Temporary fencing with gates or logs, plus an hour of shovel duty, should complete the "trap". Leave the ditch dry for a few days then gradually fill with water. A heavy plastic liner will prevent the water from seeping away. The horse will eventually cross through the water without hesitation to collect his feed.
2. If the pasture has a creek, feed on the side opposite the horses at each feeding.
3. Ride a "green" horse through water with one of his buddies who is a good water horse. Confidence is catching in this case.
4. If none of these options are available to you, then work hard to gain your horse's complete confidence and obedience, and plan to be patient during his first few water encounters. Be sure the water is only a few inches deep at first, and don't be concerned if he lunges, jumps or stumbles. The important thing is for him to cross successfully and be rewarded for it.



### Maneuvering on Steep Slopes

Steep terrain is a whole new training problem for you and your horse. At first, start on mounds and hills that you *know* he can walk straight up, and make him do it. Often, a slip or a sliding rock will spook the "green" horse that tries to lunge up a hill, and he will continually be a problem to you and others on the trail. Therefore, from the very onset of training, allow him only to *walk* up. Also, he should

never be allowed to stop on a hill, unless he has been cued to stop.

Coming down a hill presents the same problems that should be treated in the same manner. It's best to teach the horse to zig-zag down a hill so he'll learn to cope with "switchback" trails. But for a "green" trail horse, the decision to zig-zag or go straight should be yours. As in any type of horsemanship, the key is control.

## Organizing a Pleasure Trail Ride

As stated earlier, the pleasure trail ride can range from two people riding for a day or part of a day to hundreds of people for several days. No matter how small or large the ride, certain "arrangements" have to be made and contingencies planned for if it's going to be successful. Overlooking these things on a two-person ride may only make it less enjoyable; overlooking them for a large, several-day's ride could be disastrous.

The following checklist suggests the things to consider and arrangements to make in organizing and executing a pleasure trail ride. It is complete enough to cover a "large" ride, yet presents important considerations for planning a one-day private ride.

### RIDE PERSONNEL

*Ride Chairperson:* Need not be a good horseman, but must be able to organize and work with others. Coordinates the activities of all other chairmen.

*Publicity and Reservations Chairperson:* Advertises the ride via radio, newspapers, posters, mailings, etc. Contacts local gathering points, such as feedstores, barber shops, etc., to serve as pickup points for reservation forms. Distributes the reservation forms. (A firm registration deadline aids in further planning.)

*Site Selection and Accommodations Chairperson:* Visits potential sites. Secures permission from park personnel or private landowners. Repairs and marks trail. Arranges for overnight camping, sanitary facilities and parking.

*Food and Entertainment Chairperson.* Plans for the preparation or catering of all meals, including beverages. Consider large breakfast and evening meals, with light snacks at noon and around the nightfire. Logistics can become frightening on a two-day, point-to-point ride. Entertainment can

range from a campfire sing-along to something more elaborate such as a country-western dance.

*Safety Chairperson:* Makes all insurance and liability contacts. Issues and reviews with participants a "rules-of-the-trail" flyer just before starting. Arranges for a trail scout, out-riders and drag riders (identified by orange arm-bands) who are responsible for insuring trail ride safety. From any point on the trail, these safety-men should know the quickest way to "civilization", and see to the safe stabling of horses while in camp. (A veterinarian and medical doctor should also accompany the ride.)

*Horse Accommodations Chairperson:* Makes all arrangements for picket-lines, corrals, feed, bedding and water for horses. Arranges for veterinary and farrier rounds while in camp. Works closely with safety chairperson to see that horses

*Evening entertainment on a trail ride takes many forms, the special favorites often being "sing-alongs" and (for the more energetic) country-western dances.*



are tied and prepared for the night. Many rides provide a "nightrider" from midnight to dawn.

**Ride Secretary-Treasurer:** Receives and records all ride reservations, billings and accommodations contracts. All chairpersons must keep secretary-treasurer apprised of any transactions or agreements. At camp registration, should be sure that every rider has signed a "release" form, drafted by a competent attorney or insurance firm.

**Trail Boss:** Determines gait to be ridden, when to rest, and generally arbitrates any disputes. No one except the trail scout may pass him. Pre-rides and pre-times the entire ride to assure smooth logistics for the other committees. Generally relinquishes his authority to the Ride Chairperson while in camp.

## MISCELLANEOUS DECISIONS

**Time of Year:** A ride is most enjoyable if scheduled away from intensely hot or bitter cold months. Spring is often chosen, but runs the risk of late cold snaps and/or spring showers. Rides into the early fall have the advantages of colorful foliage, lack of mosquitoes and more stable weather. Avoid proximity to horse show dates in your immediate area. A new potentially successful ride may die quickly if scheduled too near a show of long standing.

**Type of Ride:** A "point-to-point" ride presents some logistical problems, such as a new campsite each night, food movement, transportation of horse trailers, multiple landowners, etc. A "base camp" ride, probably the easiest logistically, can be made into a wagon-wheel ride by leaving and entering camp from a different direction and on a different trail each day. A "loop" ride is like a point-to-point ride if, in completing the loop, a new campsite is necessary each evening; and like the wagon-wheel ride if the loop is completed each day.

**Type of Food Service:** Provided by the ride, this is most appealing to riders; but remember, the outdoors creates large appetites. Provided by the rider, this works well if only a one-day ride; can be "pot-luck" if arrangements are made ahead of time to assure a well-founded assortment.

**Horse Feed:** Can be provided either by ride or rider. Reservation form should include a space for the rider to indicate his wishes.

**Energy Supply:** Food storage—ice or refrigerator? Lighting—lanterns or electrical lights? Cooking—charcoal, firewood or propane? Many times portable generators work nicely, although they may break the solitude of camp life.

**Communications:** If the base camp has no phone, a citizen's band radio is suggested. Walkie-talkies should be available to all ride personnel.

## TRAIL RIDE SAFETY

Hopefully, all aspects of horse safety are second nature to the horseman. Rather than repeat all the rules of horse safety, the following comments refer to precautions unique to trail riding. Ride personnel should know them and take steps during the ride to assure close compliance.

1. Be sure your horse is properly conditioned. Fatigue leads to many falling and stumbling accidents.
2. Be sure your equipment is in good repair and properly adjusted. Pay particular attention to the girth, stirrup leathers and headgear.
3. Do not tie your horse too closely to a strange horse. If possible, keep him completely out of kicking range of the nearest horse.
4. While on the trail, do not crowd other horses. Your horse may be kicked or bitten, and the subsequent scramble may lead to a serious situation.
5. Do not pass any other horse on the trail at a gait different than he is traveling.
6. Watch for low-hanging branches, outcroppings of rock, shale slides, boggy stretches of the trail and other natural hazards.
7. Treat minor scrapes, abrasions, strains or bruises to either horse or rider while still minor. Left untreated, continual aggravation of the trail can multiply the effects of even slight injuries.
8. Don't try to negotiate a segment of the trail that you consider too hazardous or for which you have not prepared your horse. You have the prerogative of requesting an alternative, less hazardous route.
9. Obey all orders, directions and suggestions of the ride personnel.
10. Remember, the rules of safety and conduct for trail riding are the same, regardless of size or "importance" of the event.
11. Use common sense and horse sense.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

"Know All About Trail Riding." 1973. Sharon Saare. Farnam Horse Library. No. 120. 64 pp.

"Trail Riding." Sharon Saare. International Arabian Horse Association. 90 pp.



# Where to Trail Ride in Indiana

(Public Lands and Reservoir Areas that Accommodate Trail Riding)

Management area	Acreage	Nearest town	Source of horses	Miles of trail	Camp or day use	Fees	Season	Horse stabling
<b>STATE PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS<sup>1</sup></b>								
Brown County State Park	16,000	Nashville	Private horseowner	35	Overnight	\$1.25 entry \$1.00/horse \$2.50/camp	Year-round	Hitching rail
			Concession rental	Concession trail system	Daylight	\$1.25 entry + concession fee	May 1-Labor Day	
Chain-of-Lakes State Park	2,700	Albion	Concession rental	6	Daylight	\$1.25 entry + concession fee	May 1-Labor Day	
Harmony State Recreation area	3,200	New Harmony	Private horseowner	6	Overnight	\$1.25 entry \$1.00/horse \$2.00/camp	Year-round	Hitching rail
McCormicks Creek State Park	1,700	Spencer	Concession rental	6	Daylight	\$1.25 entry + concession fee	May 1-Labor Day	
Mounds State Park	250	Anderson	Private horseowner	8	Daylight	\$1.25 entry \$1.00/horse	Year-round	
			Concession rental	8	Daylight	\$1.25 entry + concession fee	May 1-Labor Day	
Quabache State Park	1,000	Bluffton	Private horseowner	5	Overnight	\$1.25 entry \$1.00/horse \$2.00/camp	Year-round	
Pokagon State Park	1,200	Angola	Concession rental	5	Daylight	\$1.25 entry + concession fee	May 1-Labor Day	
Spring Mill State Park	1,300	Mitchell	Concession rental	4	Daylight	\$1.25 entry + concession fee	May 1-Labor Day	
Tippecanoe River State Park	2,800	Winamac	Private horseowner	5	Overnight	\$1.25 entry \$1.00/horse \$2.00/camp	Year-round	Hitching rail
Turkey Run State Park	2,200	Marshall	Concession rental	4	Daylight	\$1.25 entry + concession fee	May 1-Labor Day	
Versailles State Park	6,000	Versailles	Private horseowner	4	Daylight	\$1.25 entry \$1.00/horse	Year-round	
			Concession rental	Concession trail system	Daylight	\$1.25 entry + concession fee	May 1-Labor Day	
Whitewater State Park	1,500	Liberty	Private horseowner	12	Overnight	\$1.25 entry \$1.00/horse \$2.00/camp	Year-round	Hitching rail
			Concession rental	Concession trail system	Daylight	\$1.25 entry + concession fee	May 1-Labor Day	

<sup>1</sup>For information, contact: Director, Division of State Parks, Room 616, State Office Building, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204.

# Where to Trail Ride in Indiana

Management area	Acreage	Nearest town	Source of horses	Miles of trail	Camp or day use	Fees	Season	Horse stabling
<b>STATE FORESTS<sup>2</sup></b>								
Clark State Forest	23,000	Henryville	Private horseowner	Firetrails	Overnight	If camping, \$1.00/horse \$2.00/camp	Year-'round	Hitching rail
Greene-Sullivan State Forest	5,000	Dugger	Private horseowner	Firetrails	Overnight	If camping, \$1.00/horse \$2.00/camp	Year-'round	Hitching rail
Harrison-Crawford State Forest	24,000	Corydon	Private horseowner	Firetrails	Overnight	If camping, \$1.00/horse \$2.00/camp	Year-'round	Hitching rail
Jackson-Washington State Forest	15,000	Brownstown	Private horseowner	Firetrails	Daylight	No charge	Year-'round	Hitching rail
Owen-Putnam State Forest	6,000	Spencer	Private horseowner	Firetrails	Overnight	If camping, \$1.00/horse \$2.00/camp	Year-'round	Hitching rail
Pike State Forest	3,000	Winslow	Private horseowner	Firetrails	Overnight	If camping, \$1.00/horse \$2.00/camp	Year-'round	Hitching rail
Salamonie River State Forest	620	Largo	Private horseowner	Firetrails	Overnight	If camping, \$1.00/horse \$2.00/camp	Year-'round	Hitching rail
Yellowood State Forest	22,000	Nashville	Private horseowner	Firetrails	Overnight	If camping, \$1.00/horse \$2.00/camp	Year-'round	Hitching rail
<b>NATIONAL FORESTS<sup>3</sup></b>								
Hoosier National Forest	177,000	Brown, Monroe, Jackson, Orange, Crawford, Perry Counties	Private horseowner	Firetrails and others as designated	Overnight	None	Year-'round	Pickett
<b>RESERVOIR AREAS<sup>4</sup></b>								
Salamonie Reservoir	8,600	Peru	Private horseowner	As designated	Daylight	None unless entry via main gate (campsites planned)	Year-'round	

<sup>2</sup>For information, contact: State Forester, Room 613, State Office Building, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204.

<sup>3</sup>For information, contact: Forest Supervisor, Hoosier National Forest, 1615 J Street, Bedford, Indiana 47421, or District Ranger, U.S. Forest Service, Brownstown, Indiana 47220, or District Ranger, U.S. Forest Service, Tell City, Indiana 47586.

<sup>4</sup>For information, contact: Property Manager, Salamonie Reservoir, R.R. #7, Box ???, Huntington, Indiana 46750.



Historic Document

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